

Czech Music

Lesson Plan

1) Music drawing

- Make a groups of 3 – 4 pupils.
- Each group gets one piece of paper.
- Each pupil gets a marker.
- Pupils close their eyes.
- Pupils listen to the music example.
 - *A.Dvořák: New World Symphony*
 - *L. Janáček*
- Pupils "draw" their feelings on the paper.
- Discuss with pupil about their paintings.

2) Reading

- Make the groups of 3 – 4 pupils.
- Hand out the text "*Introduction to Czech music*"
- Read the text with the class.
- Pupils mark historical periods by colour.
- Pupils mark musicians by another colour.

3) Time line - introduction

Pupils are working with encyclopaedia or internet

- Less gifted pupils draw a time line on the paper belt.
- Normal pupils mark important dates.
- Well gifted pupils write the names of artist style and additional information.



4) Time line

- Less gifted pupils make the card with the names of musicians (using the introduction text) and put them to the correct places on the timeline.
- Normal pupils put the names of music works to the musicians.
- Well gifted pupils write add short information about the works.

5) Working with music examples

- Less gifted pupils find the information about the work "*The Moldau*". They mark this river in the blank map of Czech Republic. They put the pictures of mentioned places in the map.
- Normal pupils prepare biographies of *Smetana*, *Dvořák*, *Janáček*, *Martinů*. They make posters about them or prepare a computer presentation. Posters can be made like advertisement.
- Well gifted pupils prepare memory game for other pupils. They choose 5 – 6 music examples. They say the name of work and author. The other pupils listen to examples then. When they are listening to examples, they put the names to the cards. (Workshehet Nr. 2)

6) The correct answers are checked then.



Short introduction to Czech music (for teachers)

The first significant pieces of Czech music include two chorales, which in their time performed the function of anthems: "Hospodine pomiluj ny" (Lord, Have Mercy on Us) (from around 1050) and "Svatý Václave" (St. Wenceslas) (from around 1250).

In the thirteenth century, the Přemysl state, the first dynasty in the lands of the Bohemian crown, was playing a major role in European politics. At this time, King Wenceslas II organised the first major musical event that was to draw the attention of all of Europe. He held a musical competition in Prague, inviting the most famous minnesingers (trouvères and troubadours) of Europe. This event was the predecessor to what we now, seven hundred years later, call the competitions of the Prague Spring Festival. Unlike today, though, the King took part in the competition personally, as a minnesinger.

Not long afterward, the famous composer Guillaume de Machaut came to Bohemia with the first king from the second dynasty, John of Luxembourg, as the King's Secretary. Domestic musical works continued to draw on French sources.

Charles IV's Prague dwelt deep in the Gothic era, the emperor himself maintained correspondence with the figures of the early Italian Renaissance – he exchanged letters with Petrarch, among others. Naturally, excellent music resounded at the emperor's court, as a distinguished accompaniment to unique art and architecture. In 1348, Charles IV founded a university in Prague, where a department of musicology operated from the very start.

The lands of the Bohemian crown did not sit on the sidelines in the Renaissance era, either. During the reign of Rudolph II (sixteenth to seventeenth century). In the field of music, Rudolf II established what was called the imperial ensemble, a unique phenomenon in that era. He had young talents sought out throughout the country for the ensemble, even from the poorest families. They were provided an education, and their talents were developed for service to the King. After years of employment, the King provided for their pensions, a rarity in that era. Major aristocrats throughout the Kingdom of Bohemia began to imitate this ensemble.



At the peak of this striking epoch, the Thirty Years' War broke out in Prague in 1618, with an uprising of the evangelical estates against the Habsburgs. In that war, the lands of the Bohemian crown lost half of their inhabitants. In the sphere of music, however, the early Baroque style started to ascend, with composers who again became ornaments of European culture: Adam Michna of Otradovice, Pavel Vejvanovský, and high-Baroque composers, such as Jan Dismas Zelenka and Bohuslav Matěj Černohorský.

In an era of the decline of the state, the nation, and the economy, people found consolation in music. Because many regenschori (heads of church choirs) in small churches in the countryside did not have much education and wrote for the simplest listeners (the English traveller Charles Burney called the lands of the Bohemian crown "Europe's conservatory"), a new type of music developed deep in the Baroque era. This new style was accessible to everyone and came to be known as European classicism.

It was in Prague and in the lands of the Bohemian crown that Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart earned true recognition and fame. To him, these lands were an island of honour and understanding. His quote, "My Praguers understand me", is famous. In Prague, in the theatre of the Bohemian estates, Mozart conducted the Marriage of Figaro and Don Giovanni. On the occasion of the coronation of Leopold II, the Bohemian estates commissioned him to write the opera La Clemenza di Tito. Bohemian aristocrats passed him from house to house and from ball to ball, and the common people whistled arias from The Marriage of Figaro, which – following adaptations – was played even in pubs. Mozart's new music literally dazzled the entire realm, primarily due to the work of his predecessors, Josef Mysliveček and František Xaver Brix. A mere week after Mozart's body was cast into a common unknown grave in Vienna, Mozart's Requiem was performed in St. Nicholas Church in Prague's Little Quarter, to commemorate the composer.

But Mozart was not the only one who was close to the lands of the Bohemian crown. At the end of the classical era, Beethoven also visited the country, travelling to Prague, the spas in Western Bohemia, Teplice, and Hradec nad Moravicí.



Not long thereafter, Europe was swept by the era of romanticism. Carl Maria von Weber conducted in Prague in the Estates Theatre, and Frederick Chopin passed through here as well. Ferenc Liszt visited the country several times and gave concerts in 1840 and 1846, as did Hector Berlioz, and later Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky, as well as Robert and Clara Schumann - in short, the European musical elite.

As with many nations, what is known as national music developed in this era, a phenomenon related to the national revival of the nineteenth century. Bedřich Smetana is considered to be the founder of Czech national music; he elevated music to an international level from the very start. Smetana and his friend Liszt, who pointed out his genius, created a new form in music – the symphonic poem. In opera, Smetana was the honourable rival of Richard Wagner, leaving behind a great body of piano and chamber work, on Czech as well as international motifs (such as Shakespeare).

Right after him shone the star of Antonín Dvořák, who was promoted by Johannes Brahms, and who, in the end, made a name for himself in spiritual music. Later, he conducted spiritual music in London, and it was there that he received an offer for the position of the Director of the National Conservatory in New York. He also received an honorary doctorate at Cambridge. Dvořák left an extensive work of oratorical, song, chamber, operatic, and symphonic music and also educated great composers – Josef Suk and Vítězslav Novák.

Czech music naturally also absorbed the new inspirations brought by impressionism, as well as the moods of Art Nouveau, decadence, and symbolism (Suk, Novák, and also Zdeněk Fibich, the author of the scenic melodrama).

The big names of the twentieth century also include Josef Bohuslav Foerster, an author of operas, songs, chamber music, and symphonies, who was called from his position in Hamburg in 1918, when the Czechoslovak Republic was created, to serve as the Rector of the Prague Conservatory and the President of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences.



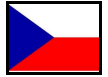
And finally, another two names that are famous worldwide - Leoš Janáček and Bohuslav Martinů, presently the most frequently played Czech composers. Janáček presented a previously unheard world of music, sometimes even music from heavenly spheres (Glagolitic Mass). Martinů was a true renaissance personality, both in terms of the breadth of his work and its forms.

Modern Czech music has also yielded, aside from the stars mentioned above, dozens of excellent composers, such as the Hába brothers, with quarter-tone music, Iša Krejčí, the author of pure neo-classicism (in an era when he was not familiar with the second period of Igor Fyodorovich Stravinsky) Ervin Schulhof, and others who tragically died during the Second World War in Terezín, where they continued to compose and put on concerts in spite of the horrors around them.

Around 1918, the famous Les Six of Paris attempted to create music that would feel like a house tailor-made to man, according to their manifesto, which was inspired by Jean Cocteau and Erik Satie. That which they did not achieve was more than accomplished by Jaroslav Ježek in Prague in 1928.

This renowned, erudite composer whose "serious music" still awaits its full assessment and understanding, managed to create jazz and popular music for the plays of the Liberated Theatre. His works are still part of the repertoire eighty years later, and are equally as fresh and arousing as when they were first performed. They are rightly considered a part of the golden treasury of Czech music. Aside from being filled with excellent humour, sketches, and dance scenes, the plays of the Liberated Theatre gradually became, throughout the 1930s, a no less rousing warning against the ascending fascism. At a time when Karel Čapek's greatest works were written, the theatre was, after countless protest notes from the German embassy, finally closed. Jaroslav Ježek and the theatre's main personalities fled to the USA at the last minute, where he managed to win the main prize with his piano sonata, before he died on 1 January 1942.

In the relaxed 1960s, the seizures of socialism started to grow weaker. Czech music recovered quickly and drew a new breath. In the second half of the century, it



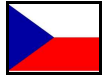
quickly reintegrated into the international trend. Many composers' interest in spiritual music was reawakened, and was even stronger following the long ban (Jan Hanuš, Petr Eben).

Czech music has penetrated the world scene primarily due to the amazing number of excellent orchestras and soloists of various focuses. String quartets (Vlachovo, Smetanovo) have achieved world acclaim, as have Suk's Trio, who play their entire repertoire from memory, the Prague Chamber Orchestra, which has no conductor, and Warchal's Chamber Orchestra. The Czech Philharmonic Orchestra with their philharmonic choir and numerous soloists (Ivan Moravec, Jan Panenka) go on tours all over the world.

Since the establishment of the Prague Spring Festival in 1946, Prague has repeatedly drawn the world's greatest soloists (S. Richter, A. B. Michelangeli, L. Berman, F. Gulda, Elizabeth Schwarzkopf, Mireille Freni, P. Robeson, L. Armstrong, I. Oistrach, Rostropovich, Menuhin, and Arthur Rubinstein) as well as large orchestras with conductors. The National Theatre and the State Opera also participate. The Laterna Magica, Black Theatre, and Chamber Ballet are also well-known, famous foreign tours take place, and Pavel Šporcl, Magdalena Kožená and Dagmar Pecková appear on the scene.

In the Czech Republic, ensembles dedicated to old music have appeared, playing Baroque and later also Renaissance music, followed by those playing Gothic music, and those which engage in Gregorian chants. Many of them perform in period costumes. Folk ensembles from various areas go on foreign tours. Czech music was also represented by political émigrés, such as Rafael Kubelík and Rudolf Firkušný. They lived and became famous primarily in the USA, Sweden, and Switzerland.

Both Czech performers and composers enjoy great acclaim in Japan. Also noteworthy is the high level of Czech musical education, which only a few countries can match. Its rocket ascent started soon after the Second World War. It must be acknowledged that the otherwise totalitarian regime then in power did invest significant amounts of money into musical education, although this was also for propaganda purposes.



Already in 1946, a new institution – the Academy of Performing Arts – was established, as the next level of the famous Prague conservatory. Brno, Bratislava, Plzeň, Teplice, Pardubice, Ostrava, Kroměříž, and České Budějovice followed.

Czech folk singers are an integral part of contemporary music, always responding to events in society; during the socialist era, they were the unofficial spokesmen of the public. The most popular are probably Jaromír Nohavica and the late Karel Kryl. But popular music figures who arose in the previous era, such as Karel Gott and Helena Vondráčková, also have permanent spots on the Czech stage. The Czech scene also has outstanding bands playing world music. The work of these bands is based on Czech folklore, but their songs are clad in modern attire. The most popular include Čechomor and the European-format Roma singer Věra Bílá. Czech musical production does not lag behind in other genres, either, boasting quality rock, jazz, hip-hop and dance scenes. The reputation of the Czech Republic abroad is greatly boosted by the opera singers Magdalena Kožená and Eva Urbanová. In 2008, the Czech singer Markéta Irglová, together with the Irishman Glen Hansard, won an Oscar for the song in the film 'Once'.

Worksheet Nr. 1

Short introduction to Czech music



The first significant pieces of Czech music include two chorales, which in their time performed the function of anthems: "Hospodine pomiluj ny" (Lord, Have Mercy on Us) (from around 1050) and "Svatý Václav" (St. Wenceslas) (from around 1250).

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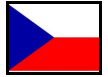
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**Worksheet Nr. 2**

What did you hear?	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	

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1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
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Internet resources

Hospodine pomiluj ny (1050)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Esf-9zK1yl4>

W.A. Mozart – Don Giovanni

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SotSKAYTyDw>

Bedřich Smetana – The Moldau (Vltava)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uI8iTETiSqU>

Antonín Dvořák – The New world symphony

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yctfXIqugXc&feature=related>

Leoš Janáček – Příběhy lišky Bystroušky

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b7hPZza8nNc>

Bohuslav Martinů – The opening of wells (Otvírání studánek)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ldkdIBMjdk>

Jaroslav Ježek – Bugatti step

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N0dy44ffYHE>

Karel Gott – Die Biene Maja (Včelka Mája)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bQXnDsNgkJE&feature=fvst>

Markéta Irglová, Glen Hansard – Falling slowly

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FkFB8f8bzbY>

